



A Letter from GFCC Founder & President Deborah L. Wince-Smith

2023: A Year of Engagement and Leadership

The GFCC and its community of engaged leaders came together this year in significant and profound ways—spanning ideas and geographies. We kicked off exciting new initiatives and hosted numerous events in partnership with our members, extending our policy impact across the globe.

Our 2023 activities consolidated our role as a leadership network spanning dozens of nations, as well as critical sectors of society and the global economy. We take pride in being a distinctive collective of leaders, thinkers, and doers shaping strategies, policies, and actions for tackling the foremost challenges and opportunities to global competitiveness.

Leaders within our community have committed to advancing competitiveness in their nations, regions, and the world – in recognition that such progress is best achieved through strategic collaboration around a common agenda. Partnerships are at the core of our work at the GFCC, and we have been invigorated by the energy and brilliance of ideas and insights exchanged within our community this year.

Our premier annual event—our Annual Meeting in conjunction with our signature Global Innovation Summit (GIS)—reunited members and fellows in London, United Kingdom (UK), from November 13 to 15, around a powerful theme: **Shape Tomorrow: Innovate the Sustainable Future**. This year's GIS, engaging leaders from industry, academia, philanthropy and the public sectors from more than 20 nations, was rich in stimulating discussions and knowledge-sharing activities

focused on an exploration of new models of engagement, business development, and policy generation at the intersection of innovation and sustainability.

Guided by the leadership of GFCC Chair Chad Holliday and bolstered by the unwavering support from our board members, our agenda in 2023 “made the case” that a transition toward sustainable development represents a significant set of opportunities: economics, social, and political. Our work also underscored the criticality of innovation at speed and scale across supply chains, businesses, and policy frameworks.

The Call-to-Action *Innovate the Sustainable Future*, a groundbreaking publication released at the 2023 GIS, reflects the expertise accumulated across our network and is proof of this commitment. This powerful framework emerged from an intense and highly interactive set of brainstorming and knowledge exchange sessions over the course of the year with our members and fellows. It offers recommendations to governments, universities, industry, and civil society to act and frame sustainability as an opportunity. I invite you to promulgate this exceptional material in your country—in its own right, and because it builds on and is highly complementary to our 2022 GIS Call to Action *Place-based Innovation: An Imperative for Future Growth*, released in Athens, Greece in November 2022. Taken together, both Calls to Action can help your nation, region or city advance innovation capacity and its competitive position in a sustainable way.

Following our tradition, we also presented the Global Competitiveness Awards during the 2023 Annual Meeting and Global Innovation Summit held in London. We were delighted to grant awards this year to Datuk Dr. Mohd Yussof Sulaiman



Global Competitiveness Awards at the 2023 Global Innovation Summit in London. From left: Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President, GFCC, and President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Datuk Mohd Yussof Sulaiman, Former CEO, Malaysia Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT); Hassan Rashid Al-Derham, Full Professor and Former President, Qatar University; and Charles O. Holiday, Jr., Chairman, GFCC; and Roberto Alvarez, Executive Director, GFCC.

from Malaysia and Dr. Hassan Rashid Al-Derham from Qatar, recognizing their leadership in advancing innovation and competitiveness in their home countries and globally.

The 2023 Annual Meeting and Global Innovation Summit was only possible due to the support of amazing hosts. I want to take the opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to the Gallup Group for receiving us at their European headquarters and for the insightful content they shared during the event. I am also grateful to the University of Southampton for hosting us in their venues and showcasing their cutting-edge research and innovative initiatives during our site visits on November 15. Last but not least, I want to thank our sponsors who made possible our events in London—Spectrum Index, West Midlands Growth Company, and Aston University.

In addition to an amazing exchange of ideas, best practices and insights, our Annual Meeting and Global Innovation Summit served as a stage for new partnerships catalyzed by the GFCC. I was pleased to witness the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between Queen's University of Belfast and Aston University. This agreement connects the universities and their innovation ecosystems to foster collaboration and the exchange of best practices, making a concrete, practical step toward advancing place-based innovation.

This landmark agreement between the two universities also embodies our efforts to drive place-based innovation across our network. Similarly, our thought leadership, reflected in the various products mentioned here, and participation in important international forums align with our mission to promote these new competitiveness standards.



GFCC and CoC members at the COP 28 in Dubai. From left: Nkem Khumbah, Head of STI Policy Systems, Governance and Partnerships African Academy of Science, and Senior Fellow, GFCC; Steven Ashby, Director, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory; Joan Gabel, President, University of Pittsburgh; Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President, GFCC, and President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Maurie McInnis, President, Stony-Brook University; and Ray Johnson, CEO, Technology Innovation Institute and Aspire.

We closed out 2023 with a signature and special event at COP 28 in Dubai. In partnership with the U.S. Council on Competitiveness, we co-developed and co-hosted a pioneering "Innovation Arena" in the COP 28 Green Zone on December 6th. Together, we convened leaders—north and south—from more than 10 nations for a special session focused on actionable recommendations to boost acceleration of the world's sustainability movement.

We were honored to have led the "Innovation Arena" a range of luminaries, including: GFCC board member Dr. Ray Johnson, CEO of the Technology Innovation Institute and Aspire of Abu Dhabi; and the Council's Vice-chair for Academia, President Joan Gabel of the University of Pittsburgh; as well as its Chair Emeritus, Dr. Mehmood Khan, CEO of the Hevolution Foundation. Additional global leaders included the directors of three U.S. Department of Energy National Laboratories, Dr. Steven Ashby (Pacific Northwest National Laboratory), Dr. Paul Kearns (Argonne National Lab), and Dr. John Wagner (Idaho National Lab), as well as two former directors of leading international organizations, Ambassador Roberto Azevedo, former Director General of the World Trade Organization, and GFCC Distinguished Fellow Kandeh Yumkella, former Director General of the UN Industrial Development Organization and the Delegation Head to COP 28 for Sierra Leone.

In the GFCC-CoC Innovation Arena, we reviewed some of the most critical challenges related to the COP 28's sustainability agenda, mapped potential contributions from universities in partnership with other key stakeholders, and connected leaders while building a pathway for continued engagement in 2024. Participants identified a series of innovation focal points to be further explored in the work of the GFCC.

The execution of the Annual Meeting, GIS, and Innovation Arena represented the high points of 2023. Throughout 2023, we were hands-on with GFCC members worldwide, participating in activities and sharing insights from our 2022 Call to Action *Place-Based Innovation: An Imperative for Future Growth*. So, please allow me to provide a more detailed recap of this exciting and impactful journey.

In February, we collaborated with the Delphi Economic Forum and Glavbolgarstroy Holding (GBS) to execute the 4th Southeast Europe and East Mediterranean Forum held in Washington, DC, U.S. This pivotal leadership meeting was crucial for progressing the innovation and competitiveness agendas in Greece and Bulgaria and reinforcing the Atlantic Alliance.

In April, we landed in Belfast, Ireland, for the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. Agreement 25, a truly high-profile event hosted by Queen's University of Belfast, lasted for three days and gathered global leaders to review the achievements of the landmark agreement and discuss future economic opportunities for the region.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who has been Chancellor of Queen's University since 2020, former U.S. President Bill Clinton, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Ireland Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, and former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair were among global leaders who attended the event led by GFCC member Professor Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University.

The GFCC was a partner with the Council on Competitiveness for the entirety of the Agreement 25 event and co-hosted the third day of activities alongside Queen's University Belfast (QUB). On that day, the focus was discussing the Northern Ireland Vision 2050 and exploring the future economic opportunities for Northern Ireland. The agenda included addresses from senior government officials and panel discussions. I was delighted to moderate a session on Global Northern Ireland with President Joan Gabel, University of Pittsburgh, and Council Vice-chair for Academia; Dr. Steven Ashby, Director, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory; Mr. Josh Parker, CEO, Ancora; Ms. Sarah Friar, CEO, Nextdoor; and Mr. Steve Orr, CEO, Catalyst.

At the end of April, we traveled to Greece to play a leadership role at the Delphi Economic Forum (DEF), hosted and led by our esteemed colleague Symeon Tsomokos. We have partnered with DEF for years to provide exclusive content on fundamental topics related to future growth, innovation, and competitiveness. The GFCC conducted two outstanding panels during the 2023 Forum, focused on how technology is reshaping the future of work, and the potential of leveraging technology and innovation to solve global challenges.

In September, we assumed a leadership position in the deployment of the 10th Industry Innovation Summit hosted by the Brazilian National Confederation of Industry (CNI)

in São Paulo, Brazil. Our global community was called upon to share different perspectives on the nexus connecting innovation and sustainability, the summit's leading discussion topic.

Several GFCC and CoC leaders joined us in Brazil. I was delighted to lead a plenary session on **Designing Tomorrow: Innovating a Sustainable Future** with a leadership team spanning the membership of the Council on Competitiveness as well as the GFCC's extended network: Dr. Padma Raghavan, Vice-Provost for Research and Innovation at Vanderbilt University; Dr. Joe Elabd, Vice-Chancellor for Research, Texas A&M University System; Dr. Syliva Thomas, Vice President of Research and Innovation, University of South Florida; Ms. Ghadah Al-Dabbagh, CTO & head of the Omnipreneurship Lab, Al-Dabbagh Group; and Margarete Coelho, Administration and Finance Director, SEBRAE (Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Services).

Following the Summit, the GFCC and CNI hosted an exclusive Forum on **Universities in Action: Building Cross-sector Alliances and Making an Impact on Society**. The event gathered C-suite leaders from Brazil, the United States, South Africa, Kazakhstan, Northern Ireland, and Sierra Leone on discussions about innovative models for cross-sector alliances and partnerships between industry, universities, and governments focused on innovation and impact.

We were joined by the senior leadership of Brazil—including the President of the Brazilian Research Council, the President of the National Higher Education Council, and the CEO of the Brazilian Innovation Agency, among others.

The events in Brazil build upon years of high-level collaboration with CNI, a sustaining member represented on our board. As part of this longstanding engagement, I also participated in the inaugural meeting of the International Advisory Committee of CNI's Entrepreneurial Mobilization for Innovation (MEI) earlier this year. The event took place in March at Oxford University's Saïd Business School, hosted by its Dean, Soumitra Dutta.

This dynamic and influential array of events and joint activities with our members complemented a broader scope of work encompassing various fronts and outputs. Ranging from regular membership activities to collaborative projects with members and the expansion of our membership, 2023 was undeniably a year of impact.

Expanding our impact

In 2023, we continued to engage our community on exclusive **Monthly Calls and Expert Sessions** focused on relevant issues shaping the world and impacting competitiveness. This year, we hosted high-profile guest speakers on discussions about the importance of life-long learning for sustainable development, the impact of Chat GPT on higher education, business opportunities arising from the European Green Deal, and the role of innovation precincts, to cite just a few.

These events are a part of our continued exclusive engagement with GFCC members and fellows. It presents our community with an opportunity to interact with top-notch global experts, ask questions, share updates, and access exclusive content in a trustworthy environment, bringing the knowledge and expertise in our network to the forefront.

This year, we also expanded our geographic and intellectual footprint, which now encompasses 44 members and 60 fellows across 6 continents and 30 nations. We welcomed four new members:

1. Spectrum Index, Ltd., which has developed a new competitiveness scoring system for nations based on the aggregation of published indicators;
2. Bucharest University of Economic Studies, a leading research university in Romania, with over 23,000 students in 13 schools;
3. Harper Adams University, a unique institution whose research agenda focuses on science and technology applied to the agrifood domain; and
4. Aston University, a public research university noted for its emphasis on career development and business engagement, and also a leader in the Birmingham Innovation Quarter, a prime example of global place-based innovation currently unfolding in the UK.

The GFCC network of fellows is an incomparable brain trust, and we were excited to incorporate four new fellows in 2023:

1. Athina Chatzipetrou, a Non-Executive Director of the Board of the Elaktor Group and former CEO of the Hellenic Development Bank;
2. Claudio Furtado, an expert in business economics, finance, private equity, and venture capital who until recently served as President of the Brazilian Intellectual Property Organization;
3. Jim Metson, a longtime colleague who served for seven years as the University of Auckland Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and now manages the development of the Newmarket Innovation Campus; and
4. Peter Smith from the University of Southampton, a professor and high-tech entrepreneur who leads the Optoelectronics Research Centre at that university, the largest research group in its field in Europe and one of the largest in the world.

We firmly believe our new members and fellows will contribute to enriching our learning and action agenda with different perspectives,¹ and we look forward to mobilizing this incredible group of organizations and individuals to build new partnerships and advance the competitiveness agendas in the countries in our network next year.

Our 2023 agenda also continued to broaden the scope of **Driving Innovation in Times of Crisis (DITC)**, an initiative in collaboration with the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST). Our world is involved in a polycrisis with simultaneous challenges making an impact on societies and economies. This initiative has aimed to develop and share best practices, explore novel strategies for cultivating resilience, and identify innovation models potentially relevant outside the context of crises. The GFCC has published the key findings stemming from the DITC 2023 research, meetings and webinars.

This year, we have also initiated a process to reignite the **University and Research Leadership Forum (URLF)**. Starting next year, the URLF will focus on creating, growing and connecting an international network of universities committed to place-making innovation, advancing public-private partnerships, and having a positive impact on local communities.

We are proud to announce Prof. Aleks Subic, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Aston University, will co-chair this new phase in the work of the URLF. In the coming years, we will execute study visits and workshops, provide visibility to assets in the GFCC network, and develop case studies focused on understanding the critical enablers of university-anchored innovation ecosystems that can be applied to other environments. We are confirmed to meet in Birmingham in 2024 for our first URLF study trip in partnership with Aston University and will share additional information with our community early next year.

Looking ahead

And the year ahead will bring many other promising activities. In 2024, we will continue to build and strengthen our community, working with members to disseminate best practices on competitiveness strategies, and promote leadership dialogues in various parts of the globe. We want to create new opportunities to engage our members with innovation ecosystems worldwide through study missions and participation in international forums, expanding our global presence and engagement.

¹ You can find full bios and information on members' ongoing projects on our website, www.thegfcc.org.

The GFCC will participate in the 9th edition of the Delphi Economic Forum, April 10 to 13 in the iconic city of Delphi. As we wind down 2023, we are exploring the possibility of extending from the DEF and engaging the GFCC Community in a trip to Bulgaria to take part in a Regional Innovation Forum hosted by GBS. Stay tuned for more information.

Additionally, we will continue to execute our Monthly Calls and Expert Sessions, and we plan to create a series of discussions focused on translating the recommendations of the Call to Action *Innovate the Sustainable Future* into concrete action, harnessing the insights and learnings on the matter in the GFCC network.

As I commented above, we will reignite the work of the URLF. Part of this initiative includes a push toward expanding GFCC's university membership, and I will be inviting all members and fellows to mobilize higher education institutions in their countries to join us in this journey. Over the next two to three years, we will host a series of study trips, starting with the already mentioned visit to Birmingham.

Building on the success of the joint GFCC and Council on Competitiveness Innovation Arena at COP 28, we also plan to partner with the Technology Innovation Institute (TII) to host a follow-up event in Abu Dhabi. This forum will advance the agenda outlined in Dubai. Additionally, we will investigate opportunities for participation at COP 29 in Azerbaijan.

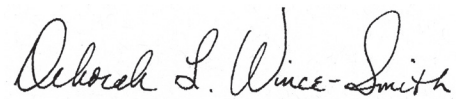
Finally, we are delighted to confirm the 2024 Global Innovation Summit will take place both in Belfast and Dublin, co-hosted by Queen's University of Belfast and the Centre for Competitiveness, between November 11 to 15. Please take a moment to save these dates on your calendar. In 2025, the GIS will take place in Doha, Qatar. We are deeply grateful to Qatar University and Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI) for staying engaged, as well as for their leadership and collaboration over the years.

I would also like to take the opportunity and extend a special thanks to our Chair, Mr. Chad Holliday, for his inspiring leadership and commitment to the GFCC since its inception. I also want to recognize Chad Evans, our Treasurer, Roberto Alvarez, our Executive Director, and the whole GFCC team for their work and commitment throughout the year.

I want to use my final words to express my pride in our special, distinctive network, which is fueled by partnerships and the unparalleled intellectual contributions of a growing membership. We celebrate together the fulfillment of a vision that leaders and countries can come together around the themes of innovation and competitiveness, and learn from each other how to promote prosperity for all nations.

Thank you for your partnership in 2023. And I look forward to working with and seeing all of you in 2024.

Warm regards,



Deborah